Forty Mile
Ch'ëdä Dëk

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Map, *Yukon Archives H-1393*
YG photo

Forty Mile circa 1890.

Guide to Forty Mile

The Forty Mile townsite is part of the Forty Mile, Fort Cudahy and Fort Constantine Historic Site. The site is located at the mouth of the Fortymile River where it empties into the Yukon River, 67 km upstream from the Alaska/Yukon border and 88 km downriver from Dawson City.

Generations of First Nation people camped at the mouth of the Fortymile River to hunt and fish in the area. In response to a gold discovery in the upper Fortymile drainage in 1886, miners and traders arrived to establish the first Yukon town.

Fortymile River is named for its location down the Yukon River from Jack McQuesten's trading post at Fort Reliance. The actual distance is 72 km (45 miles).

Fort Constantine was Yukon's first North-West Mounted Police post established in 1894 and Fort Cudahy was an American trading post and store established in 1893. Both of these sites are across the Fortymile River from the townsite of Forty Mile. The ground is marshy and the remains are fragile so it recommended that visitors restrict their activities to the Forty Mile townsite.

The Forty Mile, Fort Cudahy and Fort Constantine Historic Site is protected under the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Final Agreement and the Historic Resources Act and is jointly owned and managed by the Yukon and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in governments. It is against the law to remove anything from the buildings or the site.

Please camp inside the designated area and guard your camp fires. Boil your drinking water for 10 minutes. Be bear aware; put all your garbage in the bear-proof containers, do not keep food in your tent and do not feed the wildlife.

Routes to the Fortymile

The first miners and prospectors arrived by steamers and poling boats along the Yukon River from their explorations of other Yukon and Alaska creeks and rivers. After the town was established, Alaska Commercial Company (AC Co.) and North American Trading and Transportations Company (NAT&T Co.) vessels transported passengers and cargo between Forty Mile and St. Michael on the Alaskan coast. A more difficult but quicker route to the "outside" was taken by those who poled or lined their boats up the Yukon River and made their way over the Chilkoot Pass and out to Sitka, Alaska.

Miners in the gold fields floated down the Fortymile River to the mouth and the Forty Mile settlement where they could pick up supplies brought in on the stern-wheelers. Getting back upstream was a difficult chore of lining or poling loaded boats in the swift, shallow water. Water levels in the Fortymile River fluctuate with the spring thaw and rainfall and the river is dangerous during high water. Canyon Rapids, on the Canadian side of the international border, was the scene of at least seven deaths. The miners lined their boats through and portaged their goods around this wide chute.

Pete Anderson delivered supplies from Fortymile to the miners on the upper Fortymile drainage using a stable of forty horses. His route was a combination of winter wagon road, pack trail and travel along the frozen Fortymile River.

Yukon Archives, Claude & Mary Tidd fonds, #7459

Pete Anderson hauling in the winter's wood.

The winter road and pack trail from Dawson to the Sixtymile mines was in fair condition in 1901 when it took a team of horses three days to haul in 1800 pounds of freight. A rough trail over twenty-six miles of hilly country connected the Fortymile and Sixtymile mines. In 1903 the North-West Mounted Police described it as impassable in the goldfields. The freight rate from Dawson was fifteen cents per pound so only the richest claims could be worked with profit.

In 1906, the traders at Forty Mile were complaining that a new road connecting the mines to Eagle, Alaska was taking away their trade. Not only was the overland route safer than the river for freighters but it connected the American mines with their American suppliers and eliminated the need to divert goods through Canada. In the 1930s, there were at least two air strips in the Fortymile gold fields and small shipments of supplies could be flown in, decreasing the importance of both Eagle and Forty Mile as supply centres.

Canada's "Boundary Road" to Jack Wade Creek was upgraded to trunk road standards when asbestos was discovered on nearby Clinton Creek in the 1960s. Work on Alaska's Taylor Highway, started in 1953, was completed in 1955 and connected to the renamed Top of the World Highway in Canada within a year.

The three kilometre road to the Forty Mile site from the Clinton Creek Road was built by Hän Fisheries in the 1970s to access fish camps along the Yukon River.

Early camp sites

Forty Mile sits on a river terrace built up over time by floods of the Yukon and Fortymile rivers. The site has dense vegetation, swampy regions and grassy meadows.

This area lies within Beringia, without ice during the last glacial advance but still cold and dry. Beringia stretched from north central Yukon across the present Bering Strait, which at that time was a land bridge, and into Siberia. Humans in the region more than 11,000 years ago were hunting wooly mammoth, saiga antelope and prehistoric caribou. Artifacts found at Forty Mile date occupation here to more than 2,000 years ago. Most of the cultural material found is associated with Hän use of the site over the last 600 years.

Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in photo

This large side-notched spear point was found during excavations at St. James Church.

Long before Forty Mile was settled, First Nation people walked trails in the Fortymile River basin. During their seasonal rounds they travelled the river and crossed the tributaries using rafts, birch bark canoe and skin boats. A fence of logs and willows, used for hunting caribou, stretched 129 km from Ketchcumstock Creek to O'Brien Creek in Alaska.

Two trading posts opened in the Hän traditional territory in 1874. Fort Reliance, downstream from present-day Dawson City, and Belle Isle, near present-day Eagle, Alaska were abandoned when gold was discovered in the Fortymile drainage. The new post at Forty Mile drew in trappers from both the Hän and people from the Tanana River basin to the west.

Yukon Archives, Claude & Mary Tidd fonds, #7859

Pete and Art Anderson at Clinton Creek.

Ch'ëdä Dëk

In the Hän language, the Fortymile River is known as Ch'ëdä Dëk, meaning "creek of leaves."

In the late 18th and early 19th century, Chief Charlie Nootlah's band lived around present day Eagle and Kechumstuk and in the upper Fortymile River drainage. These Hän-speaking people were known by the missionaries as the Fortymile people. The territory of Chief David's band, based near Eagle, Alaska included the Fortymile drainage and the mouth of the river. Both groups traded at the Belle Isle post before Forty Mile was established.

Migrating Yukon River salmon (king and chum) and caribou were the principal food resources for the Hän. The Fortymile River is not a salmon stream but is known for its large spring spawning run of Arctic grayling. Eddies in the Forty Mile Canyon were a dependable place to catch grayling in woven dip nets and later fishermen set nets near the mouth of the river. The barren ground Fortymile Caribou Herd's historic range took the animals through this region and past hunters who would intercept the herd as it crossed the Yukon River on its fall migration to the upper Fortymile River. The Forty Mile site has

Library and Archives Canada, # PA-017068

plenty of white spruce, rose hips and high-bush cranberries, also important to the health and diet of the Hän.

In the early years, Hän and Tanana people came to the town to trade their furs and sell meat, fish and warm clothing to the miners. A smallpox epidemic in the upper Fortymile drainage decimated Chief Charley's band in the 1880s and he and his family were among the survivors who moved to the Forty Mile area. They maintained a traditional lifestyle while adapting well to town life, charging the miners high prices for the staples they provided.

The town offered many products and services, including the unfortunate introduction of skills for making alcohol. First Nation-owned cabins were built and the population became more closely connected with Forty Mile after Bishop Bompas opened his mission school. The two cultures lived together comfortably for the most part, and the missionary's wife was able to organize dances for the lonely miners with respectable married First Nation women.

The first traders in the country all had First Nation wives and the families were well respected. A few First Nation women lived with miners in unofficial marriages and these families usually lived separately from the main community. When the Klondike Gold Rush brought thousands of southerners into the area, some but not all of these common-law alliances were abandoned.

Newly introduced diseases remained a threat for the First Nations and between 1895 and 1898 Bishop Bompas reported 39 deaths from a lung-related sickness, probably tuberculosis. The Forty Mile population declined after the Klondike Gold Rush and by 1904 the Hän population at Forty Mile was twenty-nine. By that time many had moved to the Moosehide settlement, downriver from Dawson on the Yukon River.

Mining the Fortymile River

Arthur Harper and partner Mr. Bates located the first gold-rich gravel on the Fortymile River in 1881 but was unable to locate the spot in the following year. Before 1887, most placer mining in the upper Yukon drainage recovered fine grains of gold from shallow workings, called "skim diggings", usually on gravel bars in midstream.

Howard Franklin and five other prospectors left the gravel bars of the Stewart River to prospect on the Fortymile River in September 1886. About 150 metres on the Alaskan side of the boundary, they found exposed bedrock and panned out coarse, flattened fragments of gold, the first of its kind found in the Yukon River drainage.

Franklin went about 40 km up the Fortymile River and staked Franklin Bar and two other men staked Madden's Bar about 16 km above that. Frank Buteau and others were attracted by the rich Fortymile strike and 115 men were working on the river in the summer of 1887. Buteau staked midway between the two bars and became the "King of the Fortymile" when he took out 150 ounces of gold that year.

The miners initially started fires in the holes they dug through the permafrost to reach bedrock. They soon learned that by mining in the winter and keeping the ground frozen, they could use hard rock techniques to tunnel through the organic "overburden" as if it were rock. A winter's stockpile of "paydirt" could be washed through a sluice box with "riffles", or small obstructions, to allow the gold to settle where it could be easily retrieved or "cleaned up".

Yukon Archives, Claude & Mary Tidd fonds, #8051

Bill Couture using a rocker box on the Fortymile River.

The early miners "high-graded" the gold that was easiest to reach. Subsequent miners had to dig deeper and make a living from ground that might be difficult to sluice because of its incline or number of boulders. Later miners also looked for rich ground in old stream beds located on high-

er slopes in the valleys. Finding enough water to mine was always a problem in the swift, shallow waters of the Fortymile River basin.

Some part of the Alaskan Fortymile gold fields has been mined almost every year since discovery in 1886. Mining methods have included cutting "drifts" or tunnels, an open-cut method of shoveling off all of the dirt to expose the gold-bearing gravels, dredging, using hydraulic monitors and using heavy equipment like cats and loaders. Many of the creeks in the Fortymile mining district have been very productive although gold is not found everywhere on every creek. Most of the rich creeks in the district were located within ten years of a stampede to Dome Creek in 1893.

Those who did not strike it rich were compelled to look elsewhere and gold strikes on the Sixtymile River (1892), Birch Creek (1893) and finally the Klondike (1896) drew many miners away.

In the 1930s and '40s, Pete Anderson and his son Art had a winter trap line that extended along the Fortymile River and up Clinton Creek. It was here that Art Anderson and Willie deWolfe located the asbestos outcrop that would become the Clinton Creek Mine between 1967 and 1978.

Yukon's first town

Library and Archives Canada e007152280

The first Fortymile miners arrived at the mouth of the river late in the fall of 1886 and decided to spend the winter near there; too far from a trading post to be comfortable but close enough to get a head start on mining in the spring. About sixteen men built three cabins on an island in the Yukon River above the mouth of the Fortymile. The island was called Sixteen Liars Island in honour of the men's storytelling abilities. Five more men built a cabin at the mouth of the Fortymile.

After spring breakup miners started arriving from Alaska and other places in the Yukon. By mid-summer, they were all gathered at the mouth of the Fortymile River, anticipating the arrival of the upper Yukon River traders' boats. Al Mayo brought supplies from the Stewart River post and set up a counter on his barge.

The entire cargo sold out within forty-eight hours. Ten days later, the paddle-wheeler New Racket arrived with one hundred tons of goods from St. Michael. The freight was stored under canvas while the first trading post was built at Forty Mile.

Forty Mile was at its peak around 1893 with two well equipped stores, a good lending library and billiard room, six saloons, restaurants, a theatre, two doctors, two blacksmiths, a watchmaker, a dressmaker and several rum and whiskey distilleries.

The discovery of other gold fields, principally around Circle City, Alaska and in the Klondike, reduced the Forty Mile population and the community declined further after rough roads were built from the mines to Eagle, Alaska. Willie deWolfe remembered about six people living at Forty Mile in the 1930s including a police officer, customs agent, store keeper and hotel operator. The Mounted Police manned a customs office to monitor the movement of gold and contraband across the international border until 1938. The town continued as the residence for a few trappers and fishermen until the last resident, Bill Couture, died in 1958.

Trading furs for gold

Jack McQuesten came into the country in 1873 and went to work for the Alaska Commercial Co. (AC Co.) the next year. He established Fort Reliance just downriver from the present site of Dawson City in 1874. In the early 1880s a few would-be miners stayed the winter and used the post as a base for prospecting. They discovered paying quantities of fine gold on the gravel bars of the Stewart River.
By this time McQuesten and his partners, Arthur Harper and Alfred Mayo were working on commission for the AC Co.
A few miners made a base at their Fort Reliance post in 1882 and three years later they expanded their business by establishing Fort Nelson at the mouth of the Stewart River to supply the miners there.

In 1886, McQuesten was out of the Yukon buying miner's supplies when word reached him of the gold strike on the Fortymile River. The trading partners moved the post to the mouth of the Fortymile River in 1887 and Harper left the firm in 1889 to later establish a post at Fort Selkirk. First Nations trappers complained about the dangers of travelling down the Fortymile River and the closing of the more accessible post at Belle Isle but without success as the miner's business was far more valuable than the traditional trade in furs.

In 1892, J. J. Healy, who had been running a trading post at Dyea on the Alaska coast, organized a Chicago-based company called the North American Trade and Transportation Co. (NAT&T Co.) and established Fort Cudahy across the Fortymile River from the townsite. The next year, McQuesten backed some miners to successfully prospect the Birch Creek area in Alaska. Fortymile miners staked ground at the new site and McQuesten took all the supplies that Forty Mile could spare to establish a post at Circle City near the new gold fields.

After McQuesten moved to Circle City, the AC Co. took more of an interest in running the post at Forty Mile in competition with the NAT&T Co. Healy was not well liked by the miners, as he did not follow McQuesten's lead in extending credit, but the NAT&T had more supply boats and bigger warehouses for a better selection of goods.

In 1901, the AC Co. merged with the Alaska Exploration Co. and the Empire Transportation Co. The new company had two divisions; the Northern Navigation Co. ran the sternwheelers and the Northern Commercial Co. (NC Co.) manned the trading posts. A 1901 flood caused about $80,000 damage to the NC Co. buildings. Two of the NAT&T Co. warehouses burned at Fort Cudahy in 1903 with an estimated loss of $40,000 and the NAT&T Co. ceased operation at Fort Cudahy in 1906.

Pete Anderson and Percy deWolfe came into the Yukon with the Klondike stampeders but were unable to find good ground to mine so they fished and supplied salmon to the Dawson restaurants until the gold rush subsided. Anderson bought the Forty Mile NC Co. buildings in 1915 and became a prosperous merchant to the Fortymile and Sixtymile miners. As the population shrank and traders in Eagle, Alaska became major competitors, Anderson turned his store into a warehouse and freighted about 200 tons of goods every fall to the upper Fortymile miners.

Yukon Archives, Claude & Mary Tidd fonds, #7127

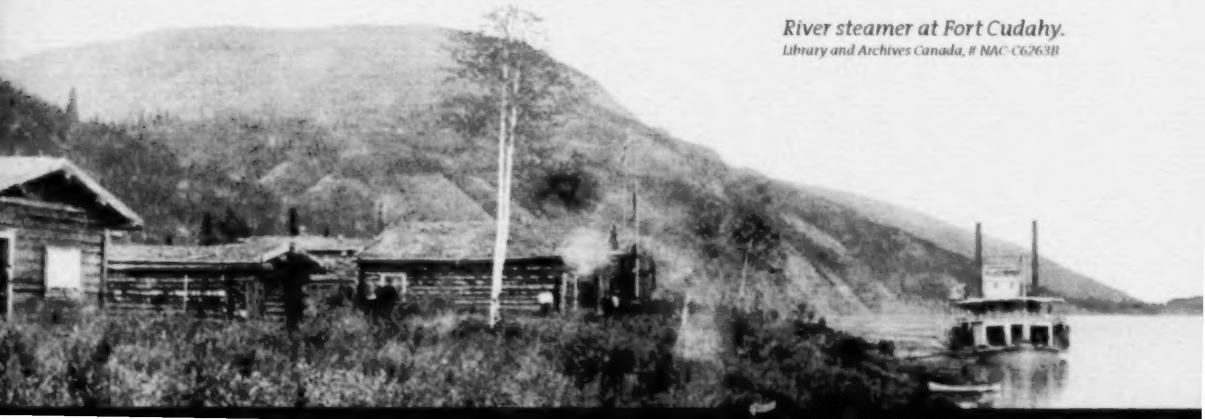
Pete and Art Anderson making a fish net in the Forty Mile NC Co. store, circa 1930s.

River Travel

The fur trader had no difficulty in supplying the few miners that came into the country until the Forty Mile discovery in late 1886. The miners would outfit for four or six months at Juneau or Sitka and depended on McQuesten, Harper and Mayo to supply the rest. Provisions came on barges "towed" by three small boats, the *Yukon*, *New Racket* and the *Explorer*. The boats could bring in about 136 tons of provisions if they made two trips to St. Michael. This was enough to supply 150 miners for a year

At the end of the summer in 1887 most of the miners left the country or made their way to a better provisioned post lower on the Yukon River. Dependable deliveries of supplies for the miners were secured after the AC Co. built the sternwheeler *Arctic* in 1889. The *Arctic* was thirty-eight meters long and could bring in enough freight so the miners on the Fortymile River could over-winter without too much suffering. Even so, the flour was apt to be mouldy and the rice lumpy.

The NAT&T Co. went into competition with the AC Co. at Fortymile in 1892 and their sternwheeler, the *Porteus B. Weare* was on the Yukon River supply run the next year. This boat was slightly bigger but the faster *Arctic* made a record five runs to Forty Mile in 1895. That same year, the AC Co. had the even larger sister sternwheelers *Alice* and *Bella* on the run or ready to go. They were built to push barges that could carry as much freight as the steamers. The NAT&T Co. responded by building a sister ship to the *Weare*, the



River steamer at Fort Cudahy.
Library and Archives Canada, # NAC-C62638

John J. Healy. The AC Co. *Arctic*, the *Alice* and the *Bella* all went above Forty Mile to trade.

The NAT&T Co. and the AC Co. had the boats and skill to compete with the much larger sternwheelers that arrived on the river after Klondike gold was discovered in 1896. The AC Co. went on to build and operate the *Susie*, the *Sarah* and the *Hannah*; the largest sternwheelers to navigate the Yukon River. By 1914, the Northern Navigation Co. and White Pass & Yukon Route (WP&YR) were the last large companies owning Yukon River sternwheelers. That year, WP&YR won a rate war and bought out the other company.

Sternwheeler traffic from Canada into Alaska declined after the Alaska Railroad was completed between Seward and Fairbanks in the 1920s. The sternwheeler *Yukon* continued to service Forty Mile as a stop on its run between Dawson and Fairbanks, Alaska until the boat was sold to the Alaska Railroad in 1943.

Mission Island

Reverend Vincent C. Sim was the first Church of England missionary to travel through this area. He visited a First Nation camp of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and Tanana people across from Jack McQuesten's trading post at Fort Reliance in 1883. He found the people very receptive to his religious teachings and appealed to the Church Missionary Society in England to send someone to the area. Mr. T. Fowell Buxton set up an annual donation of 100 British pounds and Reverend John W. Ellington was sent to Forty Mile to establish the Buxton Mission.

Reverend Ellington was to learn the Takudh Gwich'in language from Reverend Sim at Rampart House. Sim died in 1885

Yukon Archives, Claude & Mary Tidd fonds, #7398

Men loading wood for the river steamers at Buxton Mission.

and so Ellington went to Fort Simpson before arriving at Forty Mile in August 1887. The Hän and Tanana-speaking people were welcoming but found his speech hard to understand. He became increasingly unhappy, fell into debt with the traders and was the butt of practical jokes by the miners. The pious, zealous, conscientious and unworldly man was overcome by loneliness and a sense of failure. He left the country in 1888 under a doctor's diagnosis of "softening of the brain".

Anglican Bishop William Bompas and his wife, Charlotte, were made of much sterner stuff and they arrived at Forty Mile with Reverend Benjamin Totty in 1892. Bompas had been in Canada since 1865 and ministering to the Takudh Missions since 1881. The Mackenzie River Diocese was divided in 1891 and Forty Mile became the episcopal see for the Diocese of Selkirk. Mrs. Bompas was a worldly and cultured woman who brought her furniture and paintings from England and started a reading club for the miners.

Bompas tried to protect his First Nation congregation and moved the Buxton Mission to Mission Island, separated from the drinking and gambling in town, and established a First Nation school. Mrs. Bompas and Reverend Totty taught for the first year and then Miss Susan Mellet took over at the mission school and also helped Mrs. Bompas with the household chores. After a year at Forty Mile, Miss Mellet moved on to help Reverend and Mrs. Canham minister at Fort Yukon, further down the Yukon River.

At one time, Mission Island consisted of a two-storey mission building, a two-storey residence and a number of First Nation cabins and caches. When John Hawksley visited in 1915, he found that nine new cabins had been erected on the island. They were comfortable and well-built and some had more than one room.

The mission building was washed downstream by a spring flood in the 1940s. Logs from the other buildings were either reused or collected for firewood leaving building depressions and some small items to mark the spot. Near the south end of the island, heavy timber framing and some 2.5 cm cable are the remains of an overhead tramline used during high water and when melting or freezing ice blocked passage between the island and the townsite.

Preaching to the miners

Library and Archives Canada, # PA-017052

Church of England minister Richard Bowen arrived from England in 1895 to assist Bishop Bompas. He constructed St. James Church to minister to the miners and the Mounted Police and then moved on to Rampart House in 1896 and Dawson City in 1897. Reverend John Hawksley, known as one of the best Takudh language scholars in the country, was at Forty Mile in 1901. Anglican ministers continued to serve at Forty Mile until St. James Church was officially closed in 1935.

In response to a request from some Catholic miners, Jesuit priest Father William Judge arrived in Forty Mile in 1895 and settled into a double cabin that served as a chapel and dwelling. He expected a community of First Nation families and between 800 to 900 miners and found a town of 150 people with about 500 men mining out on the creeks. He travelled for a month that winter, visiting his parishioners in the coldest of weather. The next summer, Father Judge travelled to St. Michael to arrange for supplies, an organ and church bell to be delivered to the bigger mining community of Circle City, Alaska where he expected to move. He returned to Forty Mile in October to pick up his church goods and was forced to remain when winter set in early. Having learned of the Klondike gold discovery, Father Judge joined the mass move to Dawson in March 1897. He left behind a few dedicated Catholics but most he described as non-practicing or having abandoned their faith.

"One would think that gold is the one thing necessary for happiness in time and eternity, to see the way in which men seek it even in these frozen regions, and how they are willing to sacrifice soul and body to get it." Father Judge, 1897.

Early farming

The traders on the upper Yukon River depended on their gardens to supplement the dried and canned goods they brought in for the miners. Jack McQuesten tried a four-acre garden patch on a black mud flat at Forty Mile but the crop was hit with a frost. The turnips were tasty but the potatoes were small and watery. McQuesten's attempt to plough the field with two young moose met with little success.

The crops fared better after the fields were moved to areas with heavier soils, like river bottom sediment, or to south facing slopes. In 1889, Jack McQuesten raised about ten tons of turnips and some of the largest weighed three kilograms.

In the 1890s, potatoes, radishes, turnips, carrots, cabbage and lettuce were grown with fair success at Forty Mile and Fort Cudahy. The prevalence of scurvy during the winter of 1892-93 prompted everyone to have a garden and there were green vegetables in abundance. The gardens were fenced and sled dogs were tied nearby to keep the rabbits out. Nearly all the gardens were hand dug as McQuesten had the only plough in Forty Mile. Sam Patch had potato and turnip fields up the Fortymile River, about twenty-five miles from town. He was able to sell his potato crop for a dollar a pound in Forty Mile.

Yukon Archives, Claude & Mary Tidd fonds, #7375

Dave Swanson, ca. 1930s.

Dave Swanson arrived at Forty Mile in 1889 and stayed to establish a farm at the back of the townsite. His livestock pens were constructed of small poles nailed in a lattice pattern to trees. Traces of farm fencing are still visible in the vicinity of the farm.

After his store closed in the 1930s, Pete Anderson established a farm just up the Fortymile River at the mouth of Clinton Creek. He grew four to five tons of potatoes a year. Oats, brome grass and wheat grew waist high, and alfalfa, turnips, carrots and lettuce all flourished. Pete and his son Art seeded while ice was still on the Yukon and Fortymile rivers and they harvested in early September. They sold their produce in their Forty Mile store and in Dawson. As the use of horse teams declined, the cultivation of large forage crops declined in the Yukon.

You will see some of the old farming equipment as you walk around the Forty Mile townsite.

Mounted Police

William Ogilvie was the first Canadian government employee at Forty Mile when he arrived in 1887 to help determine the location of the United States/Canada boundary. He surveyed the Fortymile River to locate the boundary and determine how much of the gold fields were in Canada.

William Ogilvie's map of Forty Mile in 1891, at the confluence of the Fortymile and Yukon rivers. Forty Mile River flow is shown by the arrow on the left. The Yukon River flows right to left across the top.

Library and Archives Canada, # PA-026321

Before the North-West Mounted Police (NWMP) arrived, justice was carried out at miners' meetings, a tradition brought from southern gold strikes. The miners banned thieves from the community, a sure death sentence in mid-winter, and ruled on ownership in the case of property or mining claim disputes. The rules were based on the American mining regulations that most of the miners were familiar with.

In 1893, Charles Hamilton, manager of the NAT&T Co. at Fort Cudahy, and Bishop Bompas wrote to the Canadian government requesting an official presence. Hamilton complained about whisky smuggling and distilling and Bompas worried about the effect of alcohol on his First Nation congregation. William Ogilvie added his support for the request as he became increasingly concerned with the steady influx of American miners.

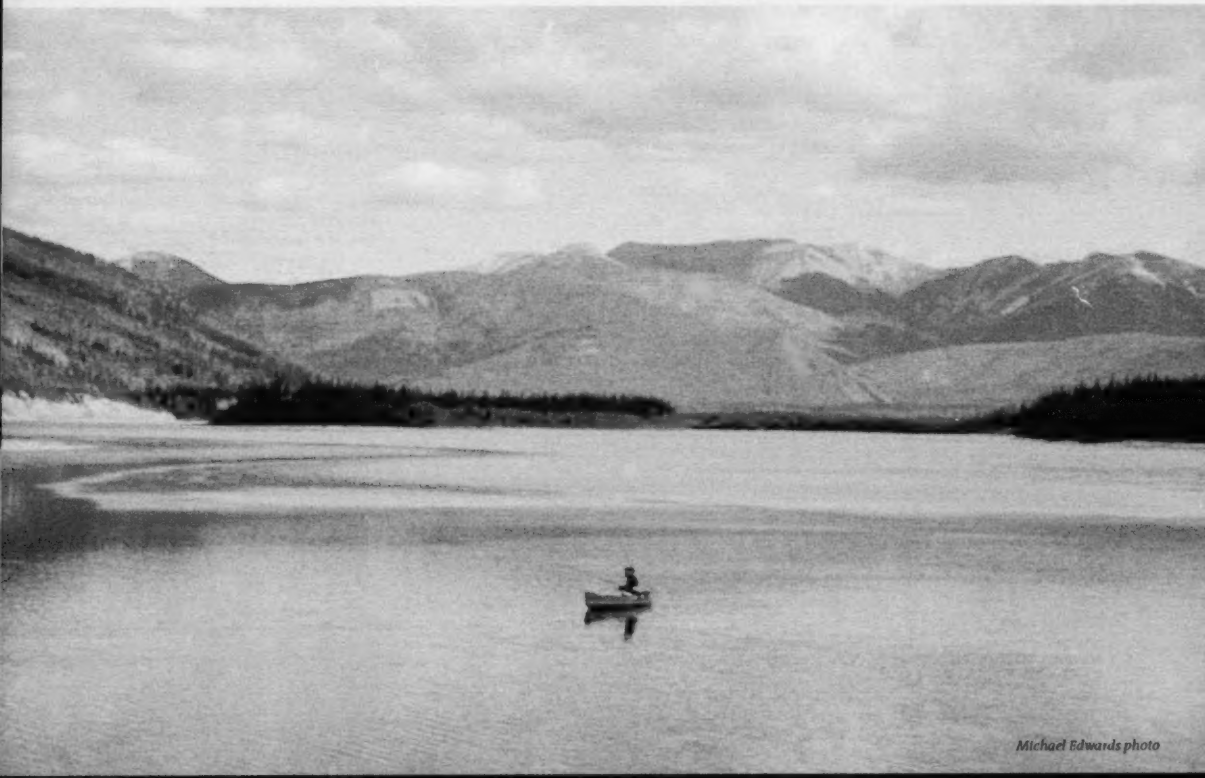
NWMP Inspector Charles Constantine and Staff-Sergeant Charles Brown arrived in 1894 on reconnaissance and they were joined in 1895 by nineteen officers and men. They erected Fort Constantine across the Fortymile River near the NAT&T Co.'s post at Fort Cudahy. This was the first step in Canadian governance of the far northwest.

During the Klondike Gold Rush most of the NWMP detachment moved to Dawson where the threat of crime and unrest was perceived to be much greater. There was a brief attempt to convert the sixteen cells at Fort Constantine into a penitentiary but it was more efficient to send serious offenders to southern jails. The NWMP at Fort Constantine ensured that no goods or gold crossed the border with duties and royalties unpaid.

In 1900, the Forty Mile detachment consisted of one staff sergeant and two constables and in 1901 the detachment moved from Fort Constantine to a two-

storey building next to St. James Anglican Church. This building was hard to heat and by 1909 the police were renting a smaller cabin during the winter months. In 1929, the Forty Mile post was shut down and the postmaster was designated as the collector of customs. By 1935 the police were again collecting customs duties at Forty Mile. The larger building was completely abandoned in 1932 and the police took over the Roadhouse until the one-man detachment was withdrawn six years later.

Fishing at the mouth of the Fortymile.



Michael Edwards photo

Most of the Fortymile River watershed lies in Alaska. The Alaska-Yukon border was located in 1895 by William Ogilvie and his survey team.

Sam Patch settled in the Fortymile gold fields in 1887, mining a gravel bar on the American side of the Alaska-Yukon border and growing potatoes on his 160-acre homestead. He was a patriotic American. When Ogilvie marked the border through his homestead, Patch pulled up the Canadian potatoes and abandoned that part of the field.

Patch was tricked into visiting Forty Mile when he was told of an imaginary international agreement that made the entire Fortymile drainage American territory. He attended a Forty Mile dance, was feted as the "lion of the hour," and never regretted crossing the line.

Yukon Archives H-1393

MAP
of the
Fortymile
Mining District and
Vicinity
COMPILED
FROM U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEYS
BOUNDARY SURVEY BY W. OGILVIE
AND PERSONAL RECONNAISSANCE
BY
RUFUS BUCK
MINING AND CIVIL ENGINEER
DAWSON
1902
Scale
four miles
YUKON TERRITORY
INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY
MILE
RIVER
FORK
SIXTY MILE
DAWSON

Walking Tour of Forty Mile Townsite

William Ogilvie did a quick survey of Forty Mile in 1889 and described the town as a rough jumble of buildings taking up an area of about 60 acres.

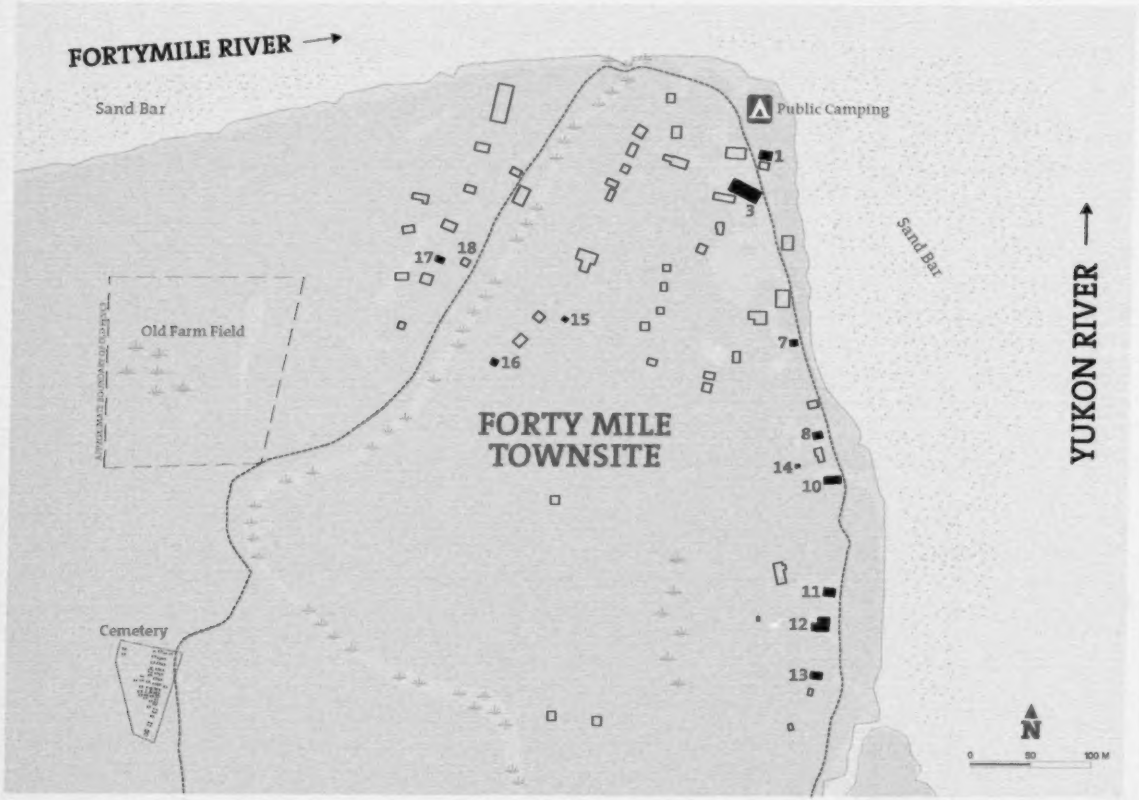
The Forty Mile townsite now includes twelve standing buildings, a cemetery, an old cable tramway and some mining, farming and sternwheeler artifacts. The abandoned cabins were a source of building materials and firewood for the remaining residents as the population waned.

Flooding is very common in the spring, when high water in the Fortymile River meets packed ice on the Yukon River and jams its way into town, moving and even destroying buildings in its path. There are no standing structures left on Mission Island and building depressions very close to the shore show the island has suffered extensive erosion. Fire is always a threat in this isolated place and in 1977 an uncontrolled camp fire destroyed Art Anderson's family home and two more log buildings.

Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and Yukon archaeologists started an archaeological testing project in 1998 and since then crews have worked on archaeological digs and building restorations.

Walking Tour Key Features

1 Fish House
3 Warehouse and Machine Shop
7 Collapsed building
8 Swanson's Store
10 Roadhouse
11 Telegraph Station
12 Royal Northwest Mounted Police (RNWMP) Station
13 St James Anglican Church
14 Metal Working Shop
15 Two-storey Cache
16 Willie deWolfe Cabin
17/18 Swanson's Farm



1 Fish House

YG photo

The commercial buildings at Forty Mile were constructed with milled lumber and sided with sheet metal panels. Corrugated metal siding and roofing material was invented in 1820 and soon became a standard for commercial buildings being strong, fire resistant, relatively lightweight and easily transported and installed.

The Fish House was built between 1895 and 1901 by the Alaska Commercial Co. and served as a small warehouse for the company. Pete Anderson used the building to store his annual five-ton catch of fish and roe. Anderson operated a fish wheel in a Yukon River eddy, dried the fish on giant racks on the shore and then tied the fish into bales for easy handling. There was a good market for dried fish by Yukon dog handlers until the use of dog teams declined. The Mounties needed six tons a year to feed their dogs.

The Fish House had a wood floor during its use as a warehouse but the wood was salvaged over the years, leaving a compacted dirt surface. In the 1970s, drying racks were erected out of scrap lumber and a fire pit excavated. This arrangement worked for a smudging fire used during the hide-tanning process.

The northeast corner has been slightly damaged by ice underlining the precarious location of the old AC Co. buildings. A small addition, present in the early 1970s, was destroyed in the 1979 flood.

3 Warehouse and Machine Shop

YG photo

This large frame warehouse was built between 1895 and 1901. All of the AC Co. buildings were located near the mouth of

the Fortymile River for the convenience of the freighters and miners who had to pole their supplies and equipment up river. The building housed a store and offices with plenty of warehouse space for the tons of goods that arrived every summer on the sternwheelers.

The AC Co. store and warehouse were in a precarious location in town and a Dawson newspaper reported that this building was submerged during a flood in 1901. It is likely that another flood, sometime between 1932 and 1972, moved the building about thirty metres southwest and turned it ninety degrees counterclockwise. The wall framing and finishes have also suffered from scavenging over the years.

Pete Anderson purchased this building around 1914 and lived here during the winter of 1932. He used a nearby barn that burned in 1977 to house about forty horses he used to freight supplies to the Fortymile mines.

Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in photo

A restoration crew at the site in 2007.

7 Collapsed building

TC photo

This log cabin was in relatively good condition in the 1970s. It was used as a stopover cabin by miners travelling up and down the Fortymile River. In 1977, an uncontrolled campfire burned three buildings in a row. A spring flood in 1979 moved the remains of one of the burned buildings about seventy-six metres up stream where it collapsed. The roof and some walls are a further fifty-three metres south.

This collapsed building may have been Henry Harper's home at Forty Mile. Henry Harper was the son of Arthur Harper, one of the first fur traders in the area and

an energetic prospector and booster for the territory. Henry Harper was a special constable for the Mounted Police at Moosehide in 1911 and was still living there in the 1930s.

8 Swanson's Store

TC photo

Swanson's General Store was constructed from wood cut between 1892 and 1894 but its orientation towards the river indicates that parts of an earlier structure were used to construct this log building around 1900.

Dave Swanson was described as a genial store keeper in 1932, willing to open his store at any hour of the day or night. Swanson was an avid player of Pinocle, a card game played with two, three or four players using a deck of 48 cards.

The Clinton Creek Historic Society completed some repairs on the building in the 1970s and installed a plywood floor over the original boards. Window sashes and doors from other buildings were salvaged and installed to make the building weather-tight. It was renovated as a dwelling for the site caretaker during this era.

YOOP Monument

The Yukon Order of Pioneers (YOOP) was founded at Forty Mile in 1894. Members were required to have come into the country before 1888. Jack McQuesten, one of the first traders in the country, was elected President.

The benevolent society supported their sick and/or destitute members and paid for burial costs through the collection of yearly dues. The membership rules

YG photo

changed over the years to include those who have lived in the Yukon for 25 years or more. Lodges still exist in Dawson and City and Whitehorse. This commemorative plaque was installed in 1972.

The society motto, "Do onto others as you would be done by", promotes fair dealings between the members. The YOOP sponsors special events, offers educational bursaries and sponsors the travels of the annually-selected Mr. and Mrs. Yukon.

10 Roadhouse

YG photo

Wood used in the construction of this building has been dated to between 1893 and 1895 with a combination of round and squared logs. The round logs with saddle-notched corners were not peeled and appear to have been added and chinked at a later date. The roof is of 12" rough lumber. A sloughed-in root cellar in the main section of the cabin contributed to the collapse of the original floor. The small log kitchen addition was built with wood scavenged from an 1886 building. A frame addition to the rear of the kitchen is of "recent" construction. The outbuilding associated with the Roadhouse appears to have been constructed of salvaged material.

The building has been at various times a roadhouse, custom's office, Mounted Police detachment and a residence for some of the officials operating out of it.

11 Telegraph Station

YG photo

This building functioned as both a telegraph station and post office for some years and was an RCMP detachment in

1939. Corporal Claude Tidd called it Freddy's cabin during his residence at Forty Mile in the 1930s.

The No. 6 steel wire that was the telegraph line arrived at Forty Mile in 1900 and the community was connected to the world in September 1901. Falling trees, snow slides and extreme weather often interrupted winter service. The first Yukon radio telegraph system was set up in 1923 and radio connection with Edmonton rapidly replaced the Yukon Telegraph line for communications to places outside the Yukon.

The 153 km telegraph line between Dawson City and the International Boundary was abandoned in 1931. Elton Shulz was the radio expert at Forty Mile in 1932 and he kept the community informed on the news from "outside."

This building was constructed around 1893 with repairs completed using scavenged logs cut in 1887 and 1889. It was reroofed between 1904 and the 1930s with a greater overhang on the east end. Exterior shutters, like the ones on this building, are commonly used by trappers or miners who need to protect their cabins from bears.

12 Royal Northwest Mounted Police (RNWMP) Station

Michael Edwards photo

Over the years, this building has been used for police activities and customs duties and as a telegraph station and post office.

After the Klondike Gold Rush, the Forty Mile detachment was reduced in numbers and Fort Constantine, across the Fortymile River, was too large and out of the way for the current conditions. The detachment moved into this building in 1901.

The RNWMP building is constructed with a combination of hewn (or squared) log and beam construction techniques; a modified form of *piece sur piece* log construction unique to the Yukon. All of the wood in the building was cut in 1894-95 and the logs floated down the Yukon River from the Chandindu River area. The building logs are numbered with roman numerals, a practice commonly used when dissembled log buildings are moved and recon-

structed so it is possible that this building was moved from Fort Constantine.

A 1902 photo shows some additions on the west side. The front veranda was gone by the 1930s and the building was completely abandoned in 1932 when the detachment moved into the smaller Roadhouse. A lean-to at the rear of the building collapsed before 1972.

13 St James Anglican Church

YG photo

Reverend Richard J. Bowen constructed St. James Anglican Church in 1895 using round log construction with lap-notched and squared corners. Most of the logs were cut in 1894 but one of the bottom logs was cut in 1887 so it may have been part of the original Buxton mission which was moved to Mission Island.

The church was used continuously for forty years. Bishop Bompas moved the church school to Carcross in 1901 but services were regularly held in St. James Church until 1935. The Moosehide missionary, Mr. Jenkins, and native catechist Jimmy Wood visited Forty Mile by sled in March 1932. Some Clinton Creek residents used the church in the 1970s for wedding ceremonies and the bell tower was repositioned about this time.

The roof was replaced and the floor was reconstructed of clear tongue-and-groove fir in the 1970s by the Clinton Creek Historical Society. A deep crawl space was found under the floor with a blocked off tunnel leading to it from the north side.

14 Metal Working Shop

Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in photo

This small two-storey frame shop was built before 1906 and used most recently as a shop for metal working.

Before the sternwheelers stopped running in the early 1950s, residents of the river communities could order parts and pieces for their farming and mining machinery and reasonably expect a winter order to be on the first boat at the start of navigation in June. After the boats stopped running, self repair and making-do was a part of everyday life as was the stockpiling of worn-out equipment and salvaged pieces that could be re-worked in repair jobs. Re-use of material is a common theme at Forty Mile.

15 Two-storey Cache

YG photo

This frame cache was built in the 1890s as a temporary structure with no foundation. It may have been built from salvaged lumber as one of the planks dates to 1885.

Caches are used to store fish nets and floats in the winter and traps and dog sleds in the summer. All leather goods have to be protected from loose and hungry sled dogs. In later years, this cache became a repository for short-wave radio magazines and radio components.

16 Willie deWolfe Cabin

YG photo

This trapper's cabin was built in a manner unlike other log cabins at Forty Mile, indicating its more recent construction in the 1950s or 1960s. The logs were cut between 1887 and 1889 and probably scavenged from an older structure. When Willie deWolfe lived here in the 1970s there was an addition running off the east wall of the

existing shed addition.

Willie's father, Percy deWolfe, and Pete Anderson came into the country during the Klondike Gold Rush. While Pete became a successful fisherman and entrepreneur at Forty Mile, Percy became a famous mail carrier for the Dawson-Eagle Stage Lines. Between 1910 and 1940 Percy deWolfe braved bad weather to deliver parcels and mail by boat, dog-team and horse-drawn sled. He was known as "the iron man of the north" and awarded the Silver Jubilee Medal by King George. The Percy de Wolfe Memorial Dog Sled Race is an annual event along the Yukon River between Dawson and Eagle, Alaska.

Willie deWolfe used to haul passengers to Walker's Fork in the upper Fortymile drainage in the 1930s. In the winter, it took two days to go up with his nine big huskies and loaded dog sled.

17/18 Swanson's Farm

Swanson's fields are located on the spot where William Ogilvie sketched in an earlier farm in his 1898 survey plan. There are the remains of extensive fences, pens, a horse-drawn hay rake, a collapsed barn and a cabin last used as storage for farm equipment. Wallpaper found in the cabin dates to the 1890s and the wood used in construction was cut between 1893 and 1895. The collapsed barn was initially used as a residence and later became a storage building for farm equipment.

In the 1930s there was a hotel run by Al Schultz on this side of the slough. Mrs. Shultz was a famous cook and the hotel was said to be better than any in Dawson at the time. The building burned in the late 1920s as did many of the important Forty Mile buildings over the years.

Forty Mile Cemetery

Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in photo

Five cemeteries surrounded the Forty Mile community in the 1890s. Wooden markers in the main half-acre cemetery span the years between 1896 and 1915. The Clinton Creek Historical Society maintained the cemetery in the 1970s, however only seven of the forty-six markers have legible inscriptions. The Yukon Order of Pioneer symbol is evident on three of them. About thirty metres west of the cemetery there are two structures that may have been used to store bodies in the winter when the ground was frozen.

YG photo

Joseph Navarro, d. 1896

Joe Navarro was originally from Chile and came to the Yukon in 1888. He took sick in November 1895 and spent some time at the North-West Mounted Police hospital at Fort Constantine but could not pay the doctor's bill. He was a member of the Yukon Order of Pioneers, formed to help people in his situation.

Barney Hill, d. 1896.

Barney Hill came to the Yukon in 1886. He was at McQuesten & Co.'s temporary trading post near Birch Creek, Alaska after gold was discovered there in 1893. He and Robert English visited the Birch Creek mines and staked a townsite on June 20, 1894. They named it Circle City because they thought it was on the Arctic Circle, 12 km to the south.

Mrs. Mary Day, d. 1896.

Hugh Day and his brother Al started prospecting the upper Yukon in 1884. Hugh and Mary Day were living on Miller Creek with their twin 16-month-old sons and mining with Al and Jack and Emile Tremblay when Mary took ill. The family came to Forty Mile at the end of May and Mary died there of pneumonia. She was 28.

L. D. Stearns, d. 1903

Lyman Stearns was originally from Montana and came to the Yukon in 1889. He died of an unknown cause at Jack Wade Creek.

Mary Anderson, d. 1912.

The wife of Peter Anderson died in child birth at age 35. The family farmed, trapped and fished and raised their five children at Half Way and Forty Mile on the Yukon River.

Ralph and Homer Purdy, d. 1915

The twin children of Frank and Susie Purdy lived for only one day.

YG photo

One of the site's many historic artifacts.

Swanson's Store in March 2008.

Michael Edwards photo

Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in photo

Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in photo

Stabilization and restoration work.

Renewal

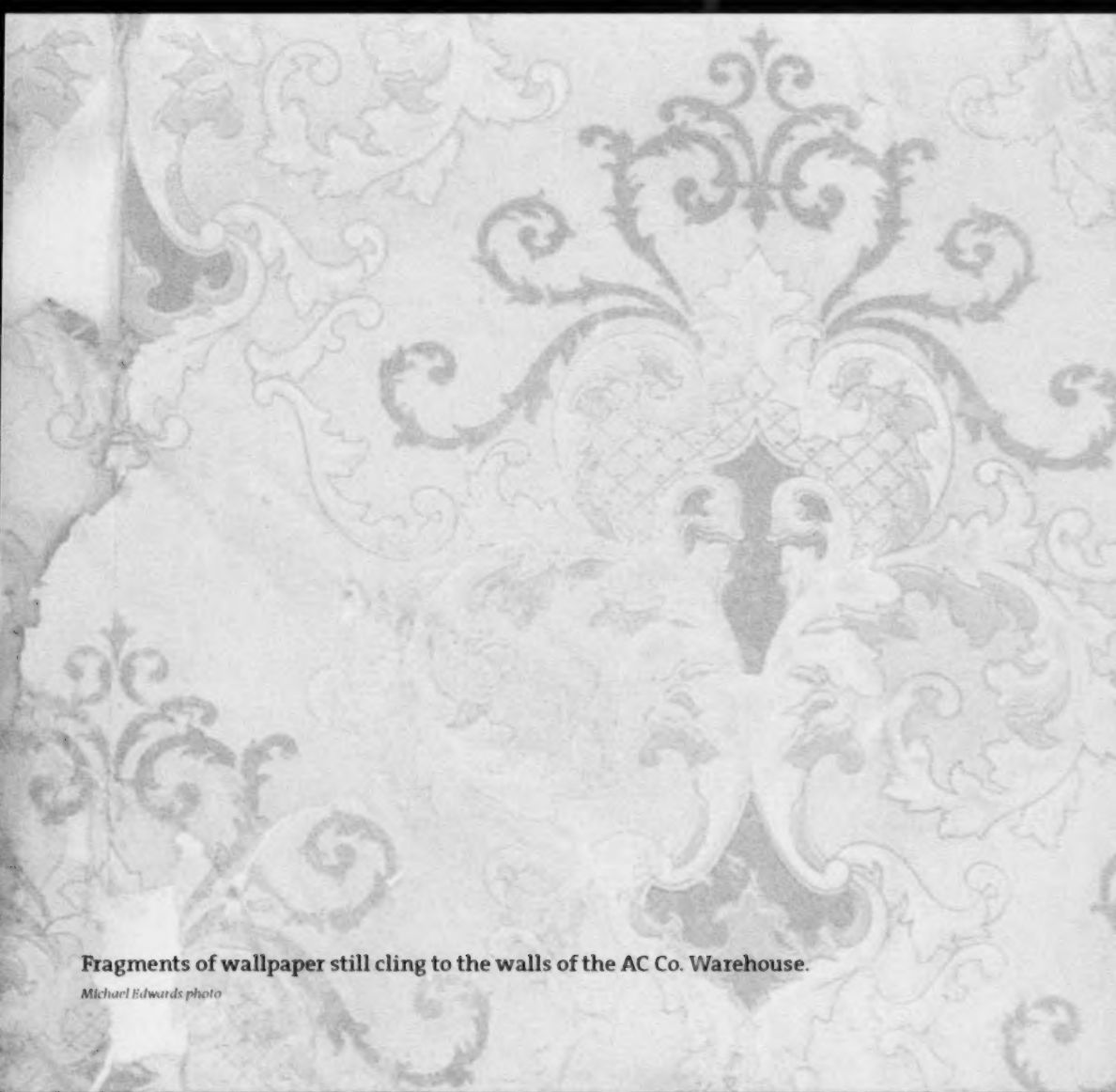
The buildings at Forty Mile have been stabilized by Yukon Government and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in under a management plan arising from the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Final Agreement.

The preservation work at Forty Mile follows the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*, which requires retaining as much of the original material as possible.

All of the major stabilization activities are complete. Door and window restoration will continue over the next few years. We expect that Forty Mile will continue to inspire Yukoners and visitors into the future as the landscape and buildings will be maintained indefinitely.

Wooden towns, buildings on flood plains, and the boreal forest itself are all fragile. Please do your part to respect and protect this valuable historic site.

A view of Forty Mile and Fort Cudahy from the hillside across the Fortymile River, 1896.



Fragments of wallpaper still cling to the walls of the AC Co. Warehouse.

Michael Edwards photo

Yukon
Government